

WHAT IS CLAIMED:

1. A digital computing system for implementing multiple independent applications on a common hardware platform, comprising:

a web based common use access terminal including an application selection device for launching an application by a user;

a web browser located in the common use access terminal including browser software responding to user activation of the application selection device for hosting one or more of said applications; and

one or more web servers respectively including server software connected by way of a secure web connection to the browser for running one or more application programs depending on the needs of a user by taking exclusive control of the system as well as controlling one or more peripheral devices located at the common use access terminal.

2. The system as set forth in claim 1 wherein the server software uses ActiveX controls residing in the browser software located in the common use access terminal to control the system and for controlling one or more of the peripheral devices for the duration of a selected application.

3. The system as set forth in claim 1 wherein the software of said browser and the software of said one or more web servers include web pages.

4. The system as set forth in claim 1 wherein application selection device includes a screen providing a display of said applications.

5. The system as set forth in claim 4 wherein said screen displays a selectable menu of said applications.

6. The system as set forth in claim 1 wherein the application selection device includes a touch screen whereby the user can manually select an application of said one or more applications.

7. The system as set forth in claim 1 wherein the common use access terminal comprises one member of an item delivery and storage system.

8. The system as set forth in claim 7 wherein the common use access terminal comprises a kiosk.

9. The system as set forth in claim 8 wherein said item delivery and storage system includes a secure item storage device having access thereto controlled by an application launched from the kiosk.

10. The system as set forth in claim 9 wherein said storage device comprises a carousel containing a plurality of storage bins normally

hidden by a set of doors controlled by an application of said one or more application programs.

11. The system as set forth in claim 8 wherein said one or more application programs include at least one application program for accessing the item delivery and storage system and one application programs for buying postage.

12. The system as set forth in claim 8 wherein said one or more application programs include a package pick-up application, a package exchange application, a postage buying application, and a club type application for pick-up and delivery.

13. The system as set forth in claim 12 wherein all of the application programs are run on a common web server.

14. The system as set forth in claim 12 wherein each of the application programs are run on individual web servers.

15. The system as set forth in claim 12 wherein one of said application programs reside singly in one of said web servers.

16. The system as set forth in claim 15 wherein said one application program comprises the postage buying application.

17. The system as set forth in claim 16 wherein the postage buying application program controls one of said peripheral devices for printing of postage at the common use access terminal.

18. The system as set forth in claim 7 and wherein the peripheral devices include a magnetic card reader, a printer, a PIN number pad.

19. The computer system as set forth in claim 18 wherein the peripheral devices additionally include a bar code reader and a signature pad.

20. A method of executing one or more independent software application programs from a common use terminal of a hardware platform including a computer sub-system, comprising the steps of:

launching an application program by browser software located in a common use access terminal by a user activating application program selection means located thereat;

forming a secure web based connection between the browser software and web server software of a web server running said application program;

assuming exclusive control of the platform including one or more peripheral devices associated therewith by said web server software using control software residing in the browser software at the common use access terminal for the duration of the application program; and

at the end of the application program, clearing all sensitive data relating to the application from the computer sub-system for subsequent use by another user.

21. The method of claim 20 wherein the hardware platform comprises an item delivery and storage system including said computer sub-system and a storage sub-system.

22. The method of claim 21 wherein the common use access terminal comprises a kiosk.

23. The method of claim 22 wherein the kiosk includes a screen displaying a menu of said application programs.

24. The method of claim 22 wherein said application program selection means located at the common use access terminal comprises a touch screen on the kiosk.

25. The method of claim 21 wherein the storage sub-system includes a carousel containing a plurality of storage bins.

26. The method of claim 25 wherein said carousel comprises a carousel including a set of doors in front of said storage bins operable in accordance with control software used by a selected application program.

27. The method of claim 21 wherein said one or more application programs include at least one application program for controlling the storage sub-system.

28. The method of claim 21 wherein said one or more application programs include an application program for buying postage at the common use access terminal.

29. The method of claim 21 wherein said one or more application programs include at least one application program for controlling access to a storage device of the storage web-system and at least one application program for buying postage at the common use access terminal.

30. The method of claim 21 wherein said one or more application programs include a package pick-up application, a package exchange application, a postage buying application, and a club type application for pick-up and delivery.

31. The method of claim 21 wherein said one or more application program include a package pick-up application server program, including the steps of:

selecting said package pick-up application program by a user at the common use terminal;

requesting tracking number information from the user by a package pick-up application server program using an ActiveX control of the browser in the common use access terminal;

inputting a tracking PIN number by the user at the common use access terminal via a bar code reader or a touch screen;

validating the information by the package pick-up web server application program;

sending a request for an ActiveX control to the browser by the package pick-up server application program to open a door of a storage device in the storage sub-system by said ActiveX control;

opening the door in front of a bin containing the package tracking number using ActiveX control of the browser;

receiving a pick-up confirmation command from the common use access terminal by the package pick-up application server program;

returning a screen at the common use access terminal to a main screen containing a manual of the one or more software application programs; and

clearing a memory of the data relating to the package pick-up application program inputted by the user for a subsequent application.

32. The method of claim 31 wherein the common use terminal comprises a kiosk.

33. The method of claim 21 wherein said one or more application programs include a package exchange application server program, including the steps of:

selecting said package exchange application server program by a user at the common use terminal;

requesting a PIN ID number from the user by said exchange application server program using an ActiveX control of the browser in the common use access terminal;

inputting the PIN ID number by the user actuatable means at the common use access terminal via a PIN pad or touch screen;

validating PIN information by the exchange application server program;

the exchange application server program sending a request for an ActiveX control to the browser to open a door of a storage device of the storage sub-system;

opening the door containing the PIN ID package using ActiveX controls of the browser;

receiving a pick-up confirmation command by the exchange application server program from the user access terminal;

returning a screen located at the common use access terminal to a screen containing a menu of said one or more application programs; and

clearing a memory containing data relating to user input information for the package exchange application program for a subsequent application.

34. The method of claim 33 wherein the common use terminal comprises a kiosk.



35. The method of claim 21 wherein said one or more application programs include an application server program for a club type application including the steps of:

selecting the club type application server program by the user at the common use terminal;

requesting club member information from a magnetic card of a user by the club type application server program using an ActiveX control of the browser in the common use access terminal;

swiping the card in a card reader at the common use access terminal;

validating the member information by the club type server application program;

the club type server application program sending a request for ActiveX control to the browser to open a door of a storage device of the storage sub-system;

opening the door containing a package requested by the member using ActiveX controls of the browser;

receiving a pick-up confirmation command by the club type application server program from the common use access terminal;

returning a screen located at the common use access terminal to a screen display containing a menu of the one or more application programs; and

clearing a memory containing data related to the information inputted by the user at the beginning of the club type application program for a subsequent application.

36. The method of claim 35 wherein the common use terminal comprises a kiosk.

37. The method of claim 21 wherein said one or more application programs comprises a postage buying application server program, including the steps of:

selecting the buying postage application server program by the user at the common use terminal;

requesting credit information from a magnetic card of the user by said buying postage application server program using an ActiveX control of the browser in the common use access terminal;

swiping the magnetic card at a card reader located at the common use access terminal;

validating credit information by said buying postage application server program;

sending a request for an ActiveX control to the browser by the postage application server program to print postage;

printing postage at the common use access terminal by ActiveX control;

receiving a print confirmation command by the postage application server from the common use terminal;

returning a screen located at the common use access terminal to a menu containing said one or more applications; and

clearing a memory of the data entered by the user at the beginning of the purchase postage application for a subsequent application.

38. The method of claim 37 wherein the common use terminal comprises a kiosk.